

Viewpoint

Herbal cosmetics products and formulations on the market, from past to present: an opinion

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Extract

Beauty and elegance are universally sought-after attributes that transcend gender boundaries, particularly in today's society where both men and women are increasingly conscious of their appearance. The escalating demand for products containing organic herbs to enhance attractiveness and youthfulness reflects this trend and speaks to a deeper cultural shift toward natural and sustainable beauty solutions. Herbal cosmetics, defined as products that incorporate at least one herbal component, such as oils or extracts, not only offer benefits that enhance appearance but also provide protective, healing, and conditioning properties. Commonly found in a variety of forms, such as cleansers, shampoos, and sunscreens, these products utilize a blend of natural ingredients, including volatile oils, fixed oils, waxes, and plant-based pigments, making them an integral part of holistic beauty and health regimens.

Keywords

Herbal cosmetics, Cosmeceuticals, Skincare, Herbal body lotion

The term "cosmetic" originates from the Greek "kosmētikos," meaning skilled in adornment or arrangement [1]. Historically, cosmetics have been used for a variety of purposes, including magic, superstition, hunting, and warfare, and since then, they have become associated with medicine and cosmetology [2,3]. Herbal cosmetics are defined as products formulated using various compatible and permissible ingredients to create a base that incorporates herbal elements for specific cosmetic benefits and are thus termed "Herbal Cosmetics" [4].

In the early 1990s, cosmetic manufacturers began labeling certain skincare products with therapeutic claims as "cosmeceuticals." These products, sold over the counter, often contain plant-based active ingredients such as retinoic acid, ascorbic acid, alpha-hydroxy acid, and coenzyme Q10, which are known for their therapeutic benefits [5,6]. These active ingredients serve multiple functions, such as increasing skin elasticity, reducing wrinkles, protecting against UV radiation with antioxidant properties, and preventing collagen degradation [7,8]. Factors such as an individual's skin and hair health, daily habits, work routine, climate, and maintenance practices can significantly influence their beauty [9].

Herbs not only enhance mental and physical well-being but also strengthen the immune system, improve food absorption, enhance sleep, and increase stamina while reducing fatigue. Products containing herbal ingredients are often referred to as botanical-origin products [10]. The Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940 in India defines cosmetics as substances intended for use by humans for cleansing, beautifying, promoting attractiveness, or altering appearance without affecting the body's structure or functions [11]. Cos-

meceuticals, on the other hand, are cosmetics that contain biologically active ingredients or plant-based components intended to improve skin health [12,13].

Herbal cosmetics, as classified, are products containing herbal ingredients with specific properties for healing, smoothing, and enhancing [14]. These natural formulations may include peroxide agents, fixed oils, scenting agents, antioxidants, protective agents, herbal dyes, essential oils, and plant materials such as mucilage, gums, and leaves. The preparation of these herbal formulations offers an effective alternative to synthetic compositions, potentially increasing the product's residence time and improving patient compliance [15].

The demand for natural products in the cosmeceutical market has risen significantly. According to the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, any plants, plant parts, herbs, or essential oils used in cosmetics must not have therapeutic effects or penetrate beyond the surface layers of the skin [16]. The legal requirements and regulations for herbal cosmetics are equivalent to those for other chemical compounds used in cosmetic formulations [13].

Herbal cosmetics can be categorized into various types, such as products that enhance the appearance of facial skin, protect against aging, promote hair growth, treat skin conditions such as acne, and sustain skin health, along with oral care products and other personal care items such as shampoos, soaps, powders, and perfumery [17]. Notable herbal cosmetics on the market include face washes with such ingredients as aloe vera, liquorice, honey, lemon juice, gum, and rosewater; body lotions containing aloe vera leaves, lemon peel, and orange oil; soaps made from palm plant ingredients; and herbal oils prepared by mixing various herbs with 63% Til oil [18]. Popular herbs used for hair colorants include henna, chamomile, indigo, Brahmi, tea, bhringraj, cinnamon, gudhal, jatamansi, kuth, kattha, amla, and coffee [19,20]. Additionally, herbs such as amalaki, bringaraj, cashmere tree, neem, naphthalene, henna, behada, magic nut, hirda, rosary pea, sweet flag, and mandor are utilized in dandruff treatment formulations [21].

In conclusion, the growing popularity of herbal cosmetics highlights a shift toward natural and sustainable beauty solutions, underscoring the necessity for stringent regulatory frameworks to ensure product safety and efficacy. As the industry evolves, it is imperative to balance consumer demands with ethical considerations and environmental sustainability. Future efforts should focus on substantiating health claims through robust scientific research and ensuring transparent marketing practices to maintain consumer trust and industry integrity.

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